News Release

Public Affairs and Corporate Communications Office
Space & Naval Warfare Systems Command
4301 Pacific Highway, San Diego, CA 92110
Telephone: 619-524-3470 Fax: 619-524-3469

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Navy UHF F9 Communications Satellite Launch Rescheduled

SAN DIEGO – Launch of the U.S. Navy's UHF Follow-On F9 communications satellite has been rescheduled to October 19th at 0711 UTC. Hughes Space and Communications Company delayed the satellite launch to replace an electronic part in the communications payload and conduct additional testing. Launch by International Launch Services from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., aboard a Lockheed Martin Atlas II launch vehicle had been scheduled for September 15th. This issue is unrelated to the spacecraft control processor anomalies on three in-orbit Hughes HS 601 satellites.

This launch will be the ninth satellite in the series of UHF communication satellites Hughes has built for the U.S. Navy. The HS 601 model satellite had successfully completed most of its pre-shipment testing. However, during an inspection at the Hughes factory in Los Angeles, Hughes determined that the workmanship on the installation of a capacitor in the communications payload did not meet its (Hughes) high standards. The capacitor is being replaced as a conservative measure to ensure full mission life success, and the rework time caused the delay of the launch.

This capacitor issue is unrelated to problems associated with the anomalies on three other HS 601 satellites. Hughes Electronics Corporation announced August 11th that launches of its HS 601 communications satellites are ready to resume after an extensive investigation revealed that electrical shorts involving tin-plated relay switches are the most likely cause of three spacecraft control processor failures on in-orbit satellites.

The UHF Follow-On communications satellite constellation is utilized to satisfy the Department of Defense requirements for Ultra High Frequency (UHF), Extremely High Frequency (EHF), and Global Broadcast Service (GBS) communications, providing fleet broadcast to all Navy ships and command control networks for selected aircraft, ships and submarines. Following the two satellites launches scheduled for the Fall of 1998 and Spring of 1999, the UHF Follow-On constellation will consist of eight modified 39-channel Hughes HS-601 satellites and one in-orbit spare. The UHF Follow-On satellites replace the Fleet Satellite Communications (FLTSATCOM) and the Hughes-built Leasat spacecraft currently supporting the Navy's global communications network, serving ships at sea and a variety of other U.S. military fixed and mobile terminals. They are compatible with ground- and sea-based terminals already in service.

UHF satellites F2 through F8 in orbit are fully operational. UHF F1 is functional, yet in an orbit which makes it unusable for its original purpose because of a launch vehicle failure. The satellites transmit to small, mobile, tactical terminals. Satellites F8, F9, and F10 carry a Global Broadcast Service payload. The GBS capability provides high-speed, wideband, simplex broadcast signals to the warfighter. This interim GBS package will revolutionize communications for the full range of the Defense Department's high-capacity requirements, from intelligence dissemination to quality-of-life programming. The satellites are versions of the Hughes body-stabilized, three-axis HS 601 model. The spacecraft was introduced in 1987 to meet anticipated requirements for high-power, multiple-payload satellites for such applications as the UHF Follow-On, direct television broadcasting to very small terminals, private business networks, and mobile communications. Procurement of the commercially-produced satellite and communications systems helps the Defense Department meet its acquisition reform and commercial, off-the-shelf procurement goals.

In July 1988, Hughes Space and Communications Company won the competition for a fixed-price contract awarded by the Navy's Program Executive Office for Space, Communications, and Sensors. The initial agreement called for Hughes to build and launch one satellite, with options for nine more. Hughes satellites, both commercial and government owned, have provided more than nine million hours of service to customers worldwide.

For more information contact:
Richard Williamson in the Public Affairs and Corporate Communications Office of the Space & Naval Warfare Systems Command at 619-524-3432.
Hughes Space and Communications Company: Communications and Customer Relations: (310) 364-6363.
Lockheed Martin: Julie Andrews or Joan Underwood at International Launch Services - 619-645-6400.
U.S. Air Force Space Command's 45th Space Wing Office of Public Affairs: Lt. Col. John Martin at 407-494-5933

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